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JOHN PAXSON/CHICAGO

ELECTION '76: THE MIDWEST

ANNCR:

AS AMERICANS PREPARE TO VOTE TUESDAY IN THE NATIONAL ELECTION, CORRESPONDENT JOHN PAXSON HAS A REPORT ON WHAT TO WATCH FOR ON ELECTION DAY IN THE AMERICAN MIDDLE WEST.

VOICE:

TO A PERSON RUNNING FOR THE PRESIDENCY, THE AMERICAN MIDWEST CAN BE A RICH POLITICAL PRIZE. ITS TWELVE STATES ACCOUNT FOR ALMOST ONE-THIRD THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTERS NATIONWIDE. AND PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT, THE MIDWEST REPRESENTS ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIVE ELECTORAL VOTES. THESE ARE THE VOTES THAT ACTUALLY ELECT A PRESIDENT AND THEY ARE ALLOCATED TO EACH STATE ON THE BASIS OF POPULATION. THESE MIDWEST STATES HAVE MORE THAN HALF THE VOTES NEEDED TO PUT A CANDIDATE INTO OFFICE.

THIS YEAR, OPINION SURVEYS INDICATE THAT PRESIDENT FORD IS ALMOST ASSURED OF WINNING FIVE STATES: NORTH DAKOTA, KANSAS, NEBRASKA, AND PROBABLY WISCONSIN AND INDIANA. DEMOCRAT CARTER IS EXPECTED TO CARRY THE STATES OF MINNESOTA AND MISSOURI. TWO SMALL STATES, IOWA AND SOUTH DAKOTA, ARE SAID TO BE MARGINAL AND COULD GO TO EITHER CANDIDATE.

THE BIG QUESTION THIS YEAR SURROUNDS THE MIDWEST'S THREE LARGEST STATES, MICHIGAN, ILLINOIS AND OHIO. TOGETHER THEY HAVE SEVENTY-TWO ELECTORAL VOTES -- AND NO ONE CAN BE CERTAIN WHICH WAY THEY WILL GO.

MANY HAD EXPECTED PRESIDENT FORD EASILY TO CARRY HIS HOME STATE OF MICHIGAN. BUT LATE POLLS SHOW THE PRESIDENT'S LEAD BEING ERODED, AND NOW THE RACE IS TOO CLOSE TO CALL.

THINGS ARE MUCH THE SAME IN ILLINOIS -- A STATE THAT IS ALWAYS CLOSELY WATCHED BECAUSE IT HAS SUPPORTED THE WINNING CANDIDATE IN EVERY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SINCE NINETEEN SIXTEEN.

THIS YEAR, AS USUAL IN ILLINOIS, THE RACE IS CLOSE, WITH MR. CARTER'S SUPPORT AMONG DEMOCRATS IN URBAN CHICAGO NEATLY BALANCED BY SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT IN SUBURBAN AND RURAL AREAS. WHO WINS COULD DEPEND TO A LARGE DEGREE ON THE RACE FOR ILLINOIS GOVERNOR. IN THAT CONTEST, REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE JIM THOMPSON IS A HEAVY FAVORITE TO DEFEAT MIKE HOWLETT, A DEMOCRAT LOYAL TO THE VERY POWERFUL POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF CHICAGO MAYOR RICHARD DALEY. FORD SUPPORTERS HOPE THAT A RUN-AWAY VICTORY BY REPUBLICAN THOMPSON COULD SWING ADDITIONAL VOTES TO PRESIDENT FORD, THUS IMPROVING HIS CHANCES OF CARRYING THE STATE AND ITS RICH PRIZE OF TWENTY-SIX ELECTORAL VOTES.

AND FINALLY THERE IS OHIO -- WHICH HAS TWENTY-FIVE ELECTORAL VOTES. IT, TOO, IS CLOSELY WATCHED IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS BECAUSE NO REPUBLICAN HAS EVER BEEN ELECTED PRESIDENT WITHOUT WINNING OHIO.

LATE SURVEYS IN THE NOMINALLY REPUBLICAN STATE SHOW DEMOCRAT CARTER HOLDING A NARROW LEAD. BUT CARTER AIDES ARE SAID TO BE WORRIED THAT A LIGHT VOTER TURNOUT COULD SWING OHIO TO PRESIDENT FORD.

(OPT) SOME STATEWIDE RACES IN THE MIDWEST ARE ALSO CAPTURING VOTER ATTENTION. ONE IS IN INDIANA WHERE THE YOUNG MAYOR OF INDIANAPOLIS, RICHARD LUGAR, IS FAVORED TO DEFEAT SENATOR VANCE HARTKE. DEMOCRAT HARTKE, WHO HAS BEEN IN THE SENATE EIGHTEEN YEARS, HAS FACED SOME DIFFICULT ELECTION

CHALLENGES IN THE PAST BUT HAS ALWAYS MANAGED TO WIN, OFTEN BY A NARROW MARGIN. THIS YEAR, MOST ANALYSIS SAY HE IS EXPECTED TO LOSE.

IN MISSOURI, DEMOCRATIC SENATOR STUART SYMINGTON IS RETIRING AFTER TWENTY-FOUR YEARS IN CONGRESS. AND IT APPEARS HIS SEAT MAY BE TAKEN BY A REPUBLICAN, FORMER STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL JOHN DANFORTH. MISTER DANFORTH HAS A SOLID LEAD OVER THE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE, FORMER GOVERNOR WARREN HEARNES.

AND IN OHIO THERE IS A TIGHT CONTEST BETWEEN REPUBLICAN SENATOR ROBERT TAFT JUNIOR AND THE MAN SENATOR TAFT DEFEATED FOR THE SEAT SIX YEARS AGO, FORMER SENATOR HOWARD METZENBAUM. SENATOR TAFT DEFEATED MISTER METZENBAUM BY ONLY SEVENTY THOUSAND VOTES IN THE LAST ELECTION AND POLLS INDICATE THE RACE THIS YEAR MAY BE JUST AS CLOSE. (END OPT)

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